

**Children's Bureau
Child and Family Services Review
Key Findings Report
Alabama Department of Human Resources**

The Children's Bureau and the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) administer the child and family services reviews. The reviews comprise two phases: (1) the Statewide Assessment, during which the State analyzes its child welfare data and practice, and (2) the onsite review, during which Federal and State teams examine outcomes for children and families by conducting case record reviews and case-related interviews, and assess State systemic issues through stakeholder interviews.

Following the onsite review, Federal staff prepare a Final Report, which is provided to the State not more than 30 days after the onsite review. States are provided a courtesy copy of the Final Report before the official Final Report is issued. In order for the State to be found in substantial conformity in any one of the seven outcomes reviewed, the outcome must be determined to be substantially achieved in 95 percent (90 percent during the first review) of the cases reviewed. States that are found not to be in conformity on any of the seven outcomes or seven systemic factors must prepare a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) that includes action steps and benchmarks for bringing the State into conformity. The PIP is due not more than 90 days after the State receives the courtesy copy of the Final Report. This report presents key findings from the Alabama Final Report of the review.

I. Identifying Information and Review Dates

ACF Region: IV

Date of Onsite Review: April 1–5, 2002

Period Under Review: April 1, 2001–April 1, 2002

Date Final Report Issued: June 18, 2002

Date Program Improvement Plan Due: September 16, 2002

Date Program Improvement Plan Approved: April 1, 2003

II. Highlights of Findings

A. The State met the national standards for four of the six standards.

B. The State achieved substantial conformity for one of the seven outcomes.

C. The State achieved substantial conformity for six of the seven systemic factors.

III. State's Conformance With the National Standards				
Data Indicator	National Standard (Percentage)	State's Percentage	Meets Standard	Does Not Meet Standard
Repeat Maltreatment	6.1	5.2	X	
Maltreatment of Children in Foster Care	.57	.15	X	
Foster Care Re-Entries	8.6	7.9	X	
Length of Time To Achieve Reunification	76.2	63		X
Length of Time To Achieve Adoption	32	13.1		X
Stability of Foster Care Placements	86.7	96.4	X	
IV. State's Conformance on the Outcomes				
Outcome		Achieved Substantial Conformity	Did Not Achieve Substantial Conformity	
Safety Outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.		X		
Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.			X	
Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.			X	
Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.			X	
Well-Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.			X	
Well-Being Outcome 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.			X	
Well-Being Outcome 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.			X	

V. State's Conformance on the Systemic Factors		
Systemic Factor	Achieved Substantial Conformity	Did Not Achieve Substantial Conformity
Statewide Information System	X	
Case Review System		X
Quality Assurance System	X	
Training	X	
Service Array	X	
Agency Responsiveness to the Community	X	
Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention	X	
VI. Key Findings by Outcome and Systemic Factor¹		
<p>A. The review noted the following strengths regarding the outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preventing repeat maltreatment of children • Preventing children from re-entering foster care within 12 months of a previous discharge • Providing stable placements for children in foster care • Placing children in close proximity to their biological families and with their siblings, when appropriate • Meeting the physical and dental health needs of children <p>B. The review noted the following concerns regarding the outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not investigating reports of child maltreatment in a timely manner • Not making diligent efforts to maintain children safely in their homes • Not making sufficient efforts to reduce the risk of harm to children • Not establishing appropriate permanency goals for children in a timely manner 		

¹ Visit the Children's Bureau Web site at <www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/sumfinding.doc> for more detailed information about the child and family services reviews outcomes and systemic factors.

VI. Key Findings by Outcome and Systemic Factor (Continued)

- Not making efforts to achieve permanency for children through reunification, permanent placement with relatives, or guardianship
- Not making diligent efforts to achieve adoption for children in a timely manner
- Not making efforts to assist children in attaining the permanency goal of emancipation
- Not facilitating visitation of children in foster care with their parents and siblings
- Not preserving children's connections to their family, faith, community, culture, and friends
- Not making diligent efforts to locate and assess relatives as potential placement resources for children
- Not making efforts to support the parent-child relationship of children in foster care
- Not assessing the needs of, nor providing services to, parents, foster parents, and children
- Not involving parents or children in case planning
- Not visiting with children or parents frequently enough to monitor and promote the safety and well-being of children
- Not meeting the educational needs of children
- Not meeting the mental health needs of children

C. The review noted the following strengths regarding the systemic factors:

- Statewide Information System
 - The statewide automated information system can determine the status, demographics, location, and goals for all children in foster care.
- Case Review System
 - The status of each child is reviewed in court at least every 6 months.
 - Foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caretakers of children in foster care are routinely notified of and given an opportunity to participate in hearings for children.

VI. Key Findings by Outcome and Systemic Factor (Continued)

- **Quality Assurance System**
 - Standards have been implemented to ensure that children in foster care are provided with quality services to address their needs.
 - The State operates an identifiable quality assurance system, which has the capacity to monitor the quality of services, identify strengths and needs of the service delivery system, provide reports, and evaluate program improvement measures.
- **Training**
 - The State operates a staff development and training program.
 - The State provides ongoing training addressing the skills and knowledge needed for staff to perform their duties.
 - The State provides training addressing the skills and knowledge needed for current and prospective foster and adoptive parents and staff of State-licensed facilities that care for children in foster care to carry out their responsibilities.
- **Service Array**
 - The State offers an array of services to meet the needs of children and families.
 - Services are accessible to families and children in all locations of the State.
 - Services offered are individualized to the unique needs of children and families.
- **Agency Responsiveness to the Community**
 - The State engages in ongoing consultation with consumers, service providers, courts, and other stakeholders.
 - The State jointly develops with its stakeholders annual reports of progress.
 - The State's services are coordinated with services or benefits of other Federal programs serving the same population.
- **Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention**
 - The State has implemented standards for foster family and adoptive homes and child care institutions.
 - State standards for foster and adoptive family homes are applied uniformly.

VI. Key Findings by Outcome and Systemic Factor (Continued)

- The State conducts criminal clearances for foster care and adoptive families and operates a case planning process that includes provisions for ensuring children's safety.
- The State diligently recruits foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of the children for whom homes are needed.
- The State uses cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for children.

D. The review noted the following concerns regarding the systemic factors:

- Case Review System
 - Children in foster care do not have written case plans and children and parents are not consistently involved in case planning.
 - Permanency hearings are not held for children in foster care within 12 months of entry into care.
 - Termination of parental rights proceedings do not occur within the timeframes specified in the Adoption and Safe Families Act.